

Minutes

On the Call: Charles “Red” Gates, Lorraine Davis, Betty Jo Graveen, Mary Greene-Trottier, Yunus Lahkani, & Roxanna Newsom; CDC- Lorraine Whitehair; AMS-Dennis Pearson; FSA- Sharon Hadder; FNS- Special Allen, Rosalind Cleveland, Sarah Kellogg-Eby, Patti Schock, Nancy Theodore, Catherine Young, & Sheldon Gordon

I. Review of Minutes – January’s call

At the beginning of the call, Sheldon briefly mentioned some of the highlights from the last conference call such as: the acceptability of new foods in the food package, goals for FY 2009/2010, the previously assigned tasks, and food package updates.

II. Guide Rate Modifications for the Food Package

Work Group members discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the current guide rate. Red Gates and others indicated that for one reason or another the Work Group has not been involved in the process to update the guide rates as they should have been. The 1-person household has been a difficult challenge with the guide rates due to large pack sizes of certain foods. Some foods that create a challenge for the food package include: rolled oats in 42 oz tubes, bakery mix 5 lbs, vegetable oil 48 oz., saltine crackers, and non-fat dry milk. It may be possible to combine certain categories to avoid the 1-person household having to skip a month or wait every quarter to receive a food item. Work Group members were reminded of some factors to consider when thinking about possible guide rates changes such as: changes to nutrition profile of the food package, unavailability of smaller pack sizes, and cost.

It was agreed by the Work Group that on May’s conference call the group would work solely on making recommendations to modify the guide rates. Nancy suggested that Program Directors should review the current guide rates and bring their options or choices they would like to see changed for their program participants. In the meantime, Sheldon will be finalizing his draft of the guide rates to distribute to the Work Group.

Betty Jo asked a question regarding the President’s stimulus package and if FNS had received funds for the FDPIR food package like the SNAP program. The food package has not directly been targeted in the President’s stimulus package; however, FNS has been able to cover the rising food cost and offer the same variety of foods to participants. SNAP benefits have been increased to help those receiving benefits cover rising food cost.

III. Follow-up on the Food Package

A. Butter alternative (buttery spread) - FSA has been researching possible buttery spreads that may work for the food package. Vendors have been slow to respond with availability and cost information. Betty Jo suggested that we reintroduce the butter to the package, while we wait to obtain the new alternative. Sheldon informed Betty Jo that butter would not be reintroduced into the program, as that was an Agency’s decision. USDA is working diligently to get a butter alternative in the food package that is suitable for cooking, may be used as a topping, as well as, lower in fat than butter. Once the information is received from the vendors, USDA will be better able to determine the next steps towards offering a buttery spread in the food package.

B. Juice – FNS is requesting AMS to purchase juice in 64 oz plastic bottles as a test buy for deliveries between October and December 2009. AMS indicated that vendors were not able to provide availability or cost on other juice varieties (white grape, cranberry grape etc.) requested at this time. Once vendors have started selling the new pack size to USDA, it will be easier to obtain cost and availability on other varieties of juice.

C. Peanuts – Work Group members were informed that the specification for the peanuts will be changed to request “unsalted.” Recent deliveries of the salted peanuts have been in error and have caused confusion as to whether the peanuts should be salted or unsalted. Previous orders were unsalted, and Work Group members indicated the take rates were low. When the salted peanuts were available, take rates increased due to clerks at the distribution centers informing participants of the product change. Roxanna and other Program Directors indicated that the

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salted peanuts were more acceptable to the participants. Some Program Directors also felt that since low sodium vegetables will be introduced into the food package, USDA could offer the salted peanuts as a trade-off. It was suggested that a lightly salted peanut should be offered by some Program Directors. However, there are no standards for lightly salted peanuts which means peanut products may vary from vendor to vendor and which could create complaints for brand taste preferences.

D. Turkey Ham – Program Directors indicated the sodium level is high in this product. They are also confused if luncheon meat was removed for its fat content why was it replaced with a high sodium product. In addition, participants do not like the product. On the last call, AMS was asked to gather information on a frozen turkey breast. Dennis informed the Work Group that although turkey breast is currently available, we could have problems around the fall/winter time with it being either too high in cost or unavailable for USDA to purchase. He suggested an alternative to the turkey ham would be deli style turkey roast. The deli style turkey roast would be available in boneless, 4-6 pounds roast made with white and dark meat (a ratio of 52% white meat and 48% dark meat per package). It is whole muscle meat that is pressed and formed into a roast. FNS will discuss the cost information - currently turkey ham is \$1.15 -1.20/lb, the deli style turkey roast is estimated at about \$1.50/lb.

E. Saltine Crackers – FSA obtained cost and availability of whole grain items to replace the saltine crackers. However, Program Directors indicated the items presented were more snack or appetizer type of foods, i.e. Triscuits. These products would not be used in the same manner as the saltine crackers. Saltine crackers are used to help stretch foods such as ground beef when cooking or eating crackers with their soups. FSA will confirm with vendors if a whole grain saltine cracker is available and if so, obtain cost information.

F. Fresh Produce – Sarah inquired about the packaging size of the carrots. Lorraine commented on how the fresh produce does not lend itself to be an easy trade-off for the 1-person household since one package of fresh potatoes is 5 pounds. The substitution of the fresh produce is challenging for the 1-person household since fresh produce may spoil quicker. The participants do not get the full advantage of the produce offering in the food package. Nancy suggested that Program Directors should talk with the produce vendors for smaller sizes available that would work for their programs. Program Directors inquired about expanding the variety of fresh produce currently available. If possible, they would like to make it its own line item versus a substitution with canned items. Nancy indicated that Department of Defense has a list of produce that would be available. Work Group members were encouraged as they think of ways to modify the guide rates to include thoughts such as this on their list.

G. Low-Sodium Vegetables – Red Gates asked how will the canned low-sodium vegetables be guaranteed for delivery throughout the year? What is the back up plan if low-sodium vegetables are not available? Patti indicated that industry is fully aware of USDA's plan to offer only low sodium vegetables to all of our household programs. The expectation is that industry will pack only for us based on the amounts we release through the invitations. Currently, USDA is purchasing vegetables on a quarterly cycle, but is exploring long term contract options to purchase vegetables for the whole year. This would eliminate canned vegetables not being available as the contract would already be in place.

H. Evaporated Milk – Sharon provided information to FNS regarding availability of the evaporated skim milk. Currently, at least two vendors are able to produce the product. The cost is relatively similar to what USDA is currently paying for the regular evaporated milk. Work Group members were interested in possibly offering the evaporated skim milk to participants. FNS proposed doing a test buy of the evaporated skim milk for the FDPIR program. Work Group members stated most are using the evaporated milk to cook and using the UHT milk to drink or use in their cereal. Most Work Group members believe the evaporated skim milk will be well received by participants just like the transition to low fat bakery mix.

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- IV. NAFPDIR - Save-the-Date! The NAFDPIR conference is tentatively scheduled for June 28-July 2 at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel in Rapid City, SD. The hotel telephone is (605) 343-8550 to make reservations. The Food Package Review Conference Call will be June 30 @ 10:15AM-11:30AM (Mountain Time).
- V. Fact Sheets – USDA will be releasing new fact sheets for the USDA Foods by mid spring 2009. The fact sheets have an updated look, new recipes, and updated food safety and nutrition information for participants.
- VI. Wrap-Up
- A. Yunus indicated the wholegrain rotini has been well received in his area.
 - B. Lorraine mentioned guide rates for fresh versus canned is limiting for 1-person households.
 - C. Red stated that folks in regions are pleased with the variety of foods offered in the food package. However, he stated that his chairman needs a better explanation why butter and luncheon meat were removed from the food package other than for reason relating to the Dietary Guidelines. Why can SNAP participants buy what they want?
 - D. Betty Jo inquired about more fresh produce i.e. fresh apple slices. She also mentioned they are compiling recipes and Samia Hamdan (Nutritionist in FNS' MRWO) is reviewing them for nutritional content.
 - E. Roxanna suggested adding more shelf stable produce to the list of fruits and vegetables.
 - F. Rosalind asked if Work Group members think participants would be willing to submit recipes for an upcoming recipe book produced by USDA. USDA will provide the template which Roxanna suggested Gloria could forward to all Program Directors.
- VII. Task Summary
- A. Program Directors
 - 1. Review current guide rates and create list of possible changes.
 - 2. Program Directors confirmed they would like to do a test buy of evaporated skim milk.
 - 3. Provide possible articles suggestions for next newsletter (both local and Program Directors edition)
 - B. AMS tasks –
 - 1. Confirm if a test buy for juice in 64 oz plastic bottles will occur and when.
 - 2. Update on availability of cream of mushroom soup either as a low fat soup or as a reduced sodium soup.
 - C. FNS
 - 1. Discuss deli style turkey roast cost and program feasibility
 - 2. Provide guide rates options to Work Group for comment.
 - D. FSA
 - 1. Confirm availability of whole grain saltine crackers.
 - 2. Provide an update on the buttery spread

Meeting adjourned at 3:03 PM.